D-44/2
1.x.r.

PATENT OFFICE
MAY 24 1935
DESIGN DIV.

LIBRARY
MAY 22 1935
PATENT OFFICE

TRADE MARK

BELLEEK

AD. 1857.

Belleek Pottery, Ltd.

MANUFACTURERS OF
THE CELEBRATED

Belleek Parian China

WM. S. PITCAIRN CORPORATION
104 FIFTH AVE., N. Y.

COPY OF A TALK ON BELLEEK CHINA.

By MISS EILEEN PHILLIPS from B.B.C. Station, Belfast, June, 1931.

I HAVE a theory, rightly or wrongly, that the elusive fragrance of China tea can best be appreciated when sipped from the most delicate and fragile of tea cups. Tea-making is an art, on which we Irish pride ourselves, an art which elsewhere leaves much to be desired, especially when we recall the French " five o'clock." But, however well made this universal beverage may be, it needs for its perfect enjoyment dainty china, and this our own country can supply *in excelsis*, of so gossamer and fairy-like texture that it seems naught but elfin fingers could have fashioned it. Indeed, this China is recognised as one of the most unique and artistic productions in the pottery world. However, it is to no supernatural agency that Belleek China owes its origin, but to the clever artistry of a tiny section of our countrymen. Ireland has but one porcelain factory, and this is in Co. Fermanagh, beautifully situated at Belleek on the rushing waters of the Erne. At one time this was the natural crossing from Tyrconnell into Connaught, and hence of great military importance, but the importance of Belleek now rests on its fishing and China factory. Why should a pottery have been founded here in 1857 ? Because in the neighbouring hills were found abundant supplies of those materials which go to make up that creamy body for which the ware is famous. The Erne produces power in abundance, all that is necessary to work the machinery, as well as for the supply of electricity for the Pottery and the town. A lovelier situation for the evolving of the most delicate handiwork could not be imagined and one feels that the craftsmen and craftswomen must somehow be inspired by nature's beauty with which they are surrounded. Mountains, purple-blue, emerald sward, the sparkling cascades of the Erne, crystal-clear atmosphere—an artist's setting, truly, for artists to work in.

Remote from " the world, where, getting and spending we lay waste our powers," lies the village of Belleek, and here in a pleasant factory 120 workers make the China that is now world-famous, and amongst the most cherished possessions of royalty. It has been awarded medals at exhibitions in Paris, Adelaide, Melbourne, and Dublin, and is an outstanding feature annually at the British Industries Fair, and the Canadian National Exhibition at Toronto.

Three years ago I was enthralled to see the evolution from China clay to those dainty, fragile, intricately-patterned baskets, cups, plates, etc., which delight the eye of a connoisseur, so leave behind you the rushing falls and come with me into the factory near by the bridge.

The clay is put into the large revolving vats, and ground against huge blocks of granite. These vats are revolved constantly for a period of six days, resulting in the clay becoming the consistency of double cream. This is then poured into warm plaster moulds, and immediately poured out. What remains clinging to the mould is sufficient to set in the required shapes which seem to be the substance of a butterfly's wing. Twenty minutes is sufficient to set the liquid clay in the mould. These moulds being in two sections, they are slipped off the article. At this stage it is a dull, uninteresting greyish object, but it is ready for its first firing. The China is packed into huge earthen troughs with lids which reminded me of large casseroles. The very finest specimens are put into an inner case before being put into the earthen troughs. Plates are put into cases and packed with fine sand. These cases and troughs containing the China are put into kilns, huge cone-shaped circular ovens, so large that I saw men using ladders to enable them to pack the kilns from floor to ceiling. When full, the aperture through which the men enter is bricked up. Ten fires are lighted from the inside, opening into the floors and walls to admit the heat. The first firing lasts for 56 hours, and necessitates the burning of 17 tons of coal per kiln. After this baking comes the glazing bath, which for the finest kinds of Belleek consists of white lead, red lead, flint and borax, and for the coarser kinds is composed of white lead, flint and borax. After glazing, the same process of baking in the kilns is repeated for slightly less time. The amount of coal per kiln now used is 10 tons. The China is now ready to be painted in delicate pastel shades of pink and green, some pieces merely have the edges painted, others are more elaborately tinted. The most popular ornamentation generally takes the form of the shamrock, but among new designs the introduction of the Celtic is a recent innovation. The designs themselves are reproductions taken from the tracery of the ornamentation of letters in the Book of Kells, one of the oldest of the ancient Irish manuscripts. These beautiful designs printed in brilliant colours of red, blue, green, yellow and shining black, produce charming effects on a background of such rich creamy softness, as Belleek possesses. Indeed one is astounded at the ever-increasing variety of design and the artistic ingenuity displayed in the creation of figures and vases of all descriptions. All this work is done by hand, as is the moulding of shells, roses and other raised ornamentation, work that needs unerring skill and consummate artistry. After the painting comes the third firing, but of less duration than the previous ones. And lastly, each specimen of the finer kinds is painted with lustre, some of it coloured. What comes out of the kiln after the fourth firing, the most delicate shade of palest primrose, had gone in somewhat the shade of brown treacle. After this firing the China is ready to be sent to the store and packing department, where a bewildering array of specimens ranging in value from a shilling or so to pounds can be seen. It is particularly interesting to watch the evolution of the open trellis basket specimens. The China clay in its earliest and most malleable form is put through a machine whence it emerges like long strips of spaghetti. These are cut into convenient lengths, and laced and interlaced by hand over a plaster cast the shape of the basket desired. A damp cloth must be kept over the strips as the lacing is done, to prevent them drying and becoming brittle before the whole is completed.

It is a mistake to imagine that nothing but this fairy-like China is made at the Belleek pottery. Earthenware goods suitable for use in colleges and institutions are also manufactured on an extensive scale.

A great demand for the finest Belleek comes from America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Ireland.

Each specimen of Belleek China is distinctly marked with the name of the place of its origin, and in addition bears a representation of the Irish Wolfhound, Harp, Round Tower and Shamrock, so that the most uninitiated, those who know little or nothing of the markings on China, can have no doubt as to the genuineness of what they are buying.

It seems perfectly appropriate that this Irish China should rely for its charm on its dainty elfin-like nature in a land where, as the song says, " 'Tis a dear old land of fairies and of wondrous wishing wells." Its simple beauty, free from sophisticated and conventional designs and colourings, conveys to those of imagination something of the spirit of the countryside, and to many an exile in a far-off colony the possession of some specimen of Belleek becomes doubly precious, not only for its own intrinsic value, but for the memories it recalls—memories of the tang of the heather, of blue turf smoke rising from some whitewashed homestead, of the sound of rushing waters, where the salmon leap.

Long may the clever craftsmen and women of Belleek continue to produce their dainty handicraft, and in so doing add their quota to the beauty of the world. In the words of the poet—Keats—" Beauty is truth, truth beauty "—that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know, but as the Pottery is open all the year round to visitors, those of you who can should by all means visit Belleek and seek for yourselves those magic fingers evolving this triumph of the ceramic art.

Belleek Pottery Ltd.

BELLEEK CO. FERMANAGH IRELAND

LIBRARY
MAY 22 1935
U. S. PATENT OFFICE

PRINTED IN IRELAND
BY
W. & G. BAIRD, LTD.,
BELFAST.